

Mars InSight Lander's 'Mole' Pauses Digging

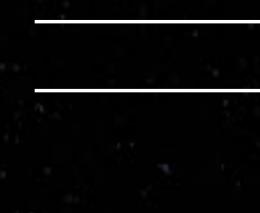
NASA's InSight lander set its heat probe NASA's InSight lander set its heat probe, called the Heat and Physical Properties Package (HP3), on the Martian surface on Feb. 12.

More imaging and testing are planned to further study InSight's heat probe, formally known as the Heat and Physical Properties Package (HP3). That testing includes a new round of hammering, which was last attempted March 2. Many ideas for freeing up the mole are being considered, all of which will require at least several more weeks of careful analysis.

There is still little clarity as to whether the "mole"—the nickname for the self-hammering spike that is part of HP3—is being blocked by a single rock or a layer of gravel. There is also the possibility that the probe or its cable might be stuck on something inside the instrument's protective housing.

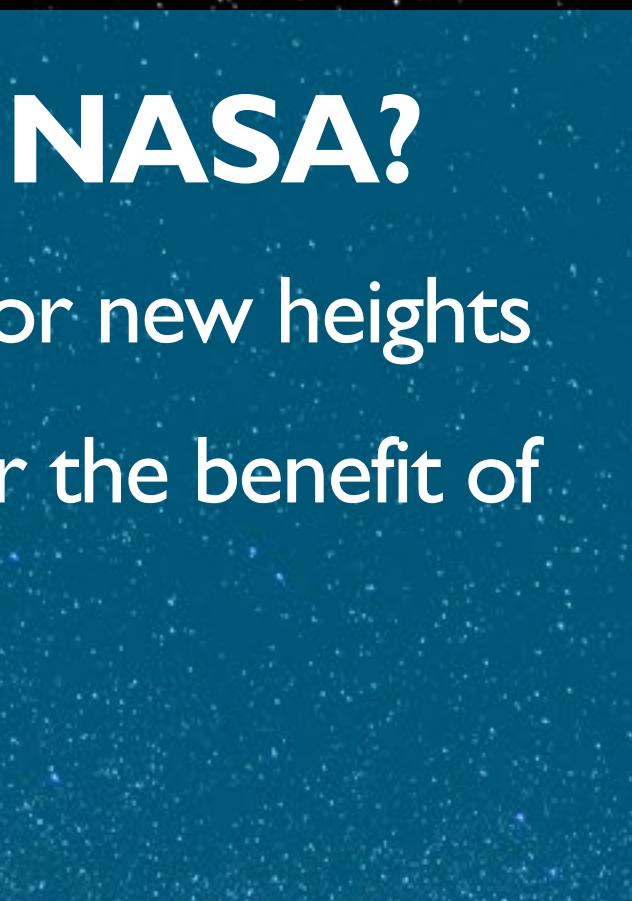
Scientists had hoped to get the probe into the ground within a few months of InSight's landing. But so long as it eventually digs at least 10 feet (3 meters) underground, they can get useful science about the Martian interior regardless of when that happens.





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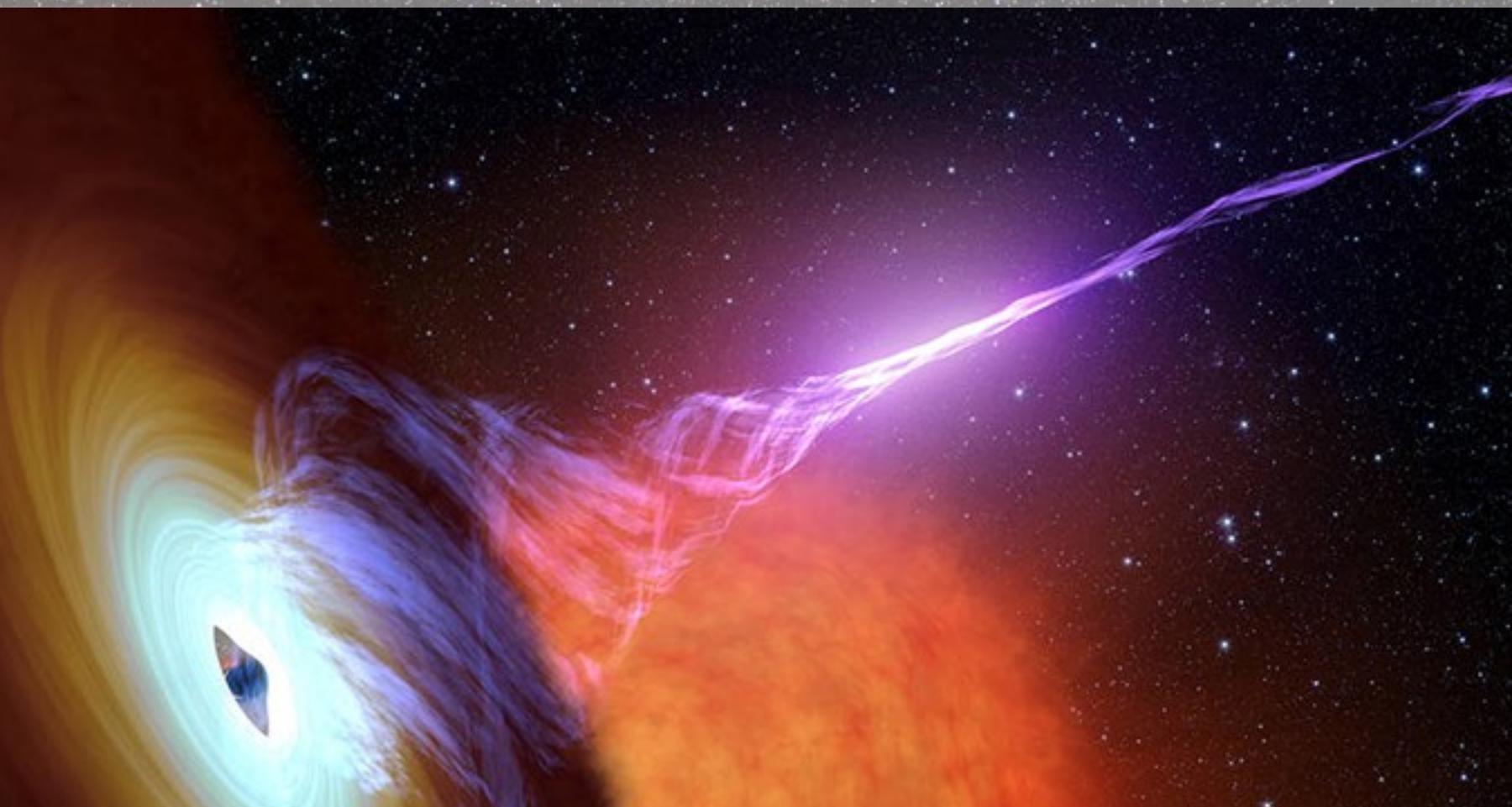
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